REMARKS

In the Office Action dated January 26, 2004, pending Claims 1-13 were rejected and the rejection made final. In response Applicant has filed herewith a Request for Continued Examination and has amended the pending claims. It should be noted, however, that no change in the scope of the claims is intended by the amendments made herein and that the amendments are made merely to expedite prosecution.

Applicant and the undersigned are most grateful for the time and effort accorded the instant application by the Examiner. On April 1, 2004, Applicant's counsel conducted a telephone interview with the Examiner during which the claims of the present application and the applied art were discussed. No agreement, however, was reached with respect to the claims.

Applicant notes with thanks the Office has clarified the objection to the log equation on page 8, line 3. Applicant has amended the specification to address this objection, and it is respectfully submitted the objection has been obviated.

Claims 1 and 2 stand rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as anticipated by Gadd. Claims 3-13 stand rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as obvious over Gadd in view of Pfeifer et al. and further in view of alleged well known prior art. Claims 1, 11, and 13 are independent claims; the remaining claims are dependent claims. Reconsideration of the claims as amended is respectfully requested.

Each of the independent claims has been rewritten to refer to a "character sequence" whose phonetic information is represented in a "bit string." A bit sting is

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commonly understood to be strings of 1's and 0's. As discussed in the specification, "[b]y representing the phonetic information as a sequence of bits, i.e., a binary value, the performance of a database search is significantly increased **as binary values can be compared much faster than character strings.**" (Page 9, lines 5-8) Character strings customarily being understood to be a data type that contains a series of alphanumeric characters. The amount of time needed to search a database for particular phonetic information is thus decreased by representing the phonetic information in a bit string. When dealing with large amounts of data, minimizing search time is desirable.

Other claims are directed to the precision with which each piece of phonetic information is represented in the bit string. As discussed in the specification, the first piece of phonetic information (the first letter of the name) is coded with five bits, the second piece of phonetic information is coded at four bits (a lower resolution), and so on. (Page 7, line 16 - Page 8, line 16; "[t]he coding can therefore be described as progressively lossy."). The specification also provides an example where progressively lossy coding is used when the bit stream is preferably limited to 32 bits. (Page 9, line 15 - Page 10, line 10) Using the preferred 32-bit bit stream, 9 items of phonetic information may be encoded. Thus, the ambiguity associated with "Hilbert" and "Heilbronn" having the same phonetic representation (A416) is avoided. (Page 3, line 11 - Page 4, line 9)

As presently best understood, neither Gadd nor Pfeifer et al. disclose or teach representing phonetic information in a "bit string" to increase the speed with which the phonetic information may be searched or the use of progressively lossy coding to provide increased phonetic information thereby decreasing ambiguity. Thus, not only does Gadd

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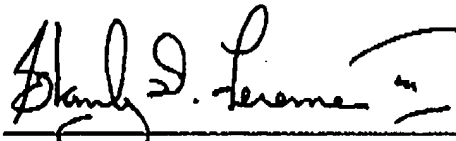
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not anticipate the present invention, the combination of Gadd and Pfeifer et al. would not resulted in the present invention. A 35 U.S.C. 103(a) rejection is therefore improper.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that Claims 1, 11, and 13 fully distinguish over the applied art and are thus allowable. By virtue of dependence from what is believed to be allowable independent Claims 1 and 11, it is respectfully submitted that Claims 2-10 and 12 are also presently allowable.

In summary, it is respectfully submitted that the instant application, including Claims 1-13, is in condition for allowance. Notice to that effect is hereby earnestly solicited.

Applicant's undersigned attorney would welcome further discussion with the Office in the event there are any further issues with this application.

Respectfully submitted,

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